

Claims

1. A method for improving activity in a pet, the method comprising administering to the pet a nutritional agent which promotes the growth of bifido- and lactic-bacteria in the gastro-intestinal tract of the pet.
2. A method according to claim 1 in which the nutritional agent is a component of a nutritionally complete pet food.
3. A method according to claim 1 in which the nutritional agent is selected from the group of prebiotics and probiotic micro-organisms.
4. A method according to claim 3 in which the prebiotic is selected from the group of inulin, fructooligosaccharides and plant materials which contain inulin and/or fructooligosaccharides.
5. A method according to claim 1 in which the pet food further comprises a long chain fatty acid.
6. A method according to claim 1 in which the pet food further comprises a starch source selected from one or more of corn, rice, barley, and wheat.
7. A method for improving activity in an elderly pet, the method comprising administering to the pet a nutritionally complete pet food which contains a nutritional agent which promotes the growth of bifido- and lactic-bacteria in the gastro-intestinal tract of the pet.
8. A method according to claim 7 in which the nutritional agent is selected from the group of prebiotics and probiotic micro-organisms.
9. A method according to claim 8 in which the prebiotic is selected from the group of inulin, fructooligosaccharides and plant materials which contain inulin and/or fructooligosaccharides.
10. A method according to claim 7 in which the pet food contains about 0.1% to about 5% by weight of a prebiotic as the nutritional agent.

11. A method according to Claim 7 in which the pet food contains about  $10^4$  to about  $10^{10}$  cells of a probiotic micro-organism per gram of the pet food as the nutritional agent.

12. A method according to Claim 7 in which the pet food further comprises a  
5 long chain fatty acid.

13. A method according to Claim 1 in which the pet food further comprises a starch source selected from one or more of corn, rice, barley, and wheat.

14. A method for improving activity in an elderly dog, the method comprising  
administering to the dog a nutritionally complete pet food which contains a nutritional  
10 agent which promotes the growth of bifido- and lactic-bacteria in the gastro-intestinal tract of the dog.

15. A method for improving activity in an elderly dog, the method comprising  
administering to the dog a nutritionally complete pet food which contains a nutritional  
agent which promotes the growth of bifido- and lactic-bacteria in the gastro-intestinal tract  
15 of the dog.

16. A method for ameliorating joint stiffness in a pet, the method comprising  
administering to the pet a nutritional agent which promotes the growth of bifido- and  
lactic-bacteria in the gastro-intestinal tract of the pet.

17. A method according to Claim 16 wherein the nutritional agent assists in  
20 improving systemic inflammatory status in a pet.

18. A method according to Claim 17 wherein the nutritional agent assists in  
reducing concentrations of pathogenic bacteria known to contribute to an increased  
inflammatory status.

19. A method according to Claim 16 in which the pet is an elderly dog.

20. A method according to Claim 16 in which the pet is an elderly cat.  
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22. A method of providing a pet with more energy comprising administering to the pet a nutritional agent which promotes the growth of bifido- and lactic-bacteria in the gastro-intestinal tract of the pet.

10            24.    A method of improving physical activity levels in an elderly pet comprising administering to the pet a pet food composition comprising at least about 1% chicory by weight as a source of inulin.

25. A method of increasing activity level in a pet of at least 5 years of age, comprising feeding the pet a balanced diet comprising a pet food formulation comprising inulin in an effective amount to reduce joint stiffness.

26. A method of returning a senior pet to a previous level of liveliness, comprising administering to the pet a pet food composition comprising inulin in an amount effective to increase physical activity in such pet.